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ABSTRACT

The validity of Bilingual Education in a multi-cultural preschool setting is examined and supported. Further, a discussion of how mental health may be linked to the recognition of a child's native language, in his aquisition of a positive self-concept, is delineated. Additionally, theoretical information is supported by a survey completed in 1976, with specific reference to cultural values and their effect on education and language learning. Conclusively, teacher attitudes play a major role in a child's acquisition of a healthy self-concept; therefore, curricular inclusion and consideration of language and ethnicity will positively affect the overall learning process. (Author)

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"Culture & Clay: The Reshaping of an Educational System"

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"We all make mistakes. But to commit a wrong, to lower the dignity of a child and not be aware that the dignity has been impaired, is much more serious than the child's skipping of words during oral reading."
C. Moustakas, The Authentic Teacher

The focus of this presentation will be the impact of the first school experience for the Mexican American preschool child who is non-English speaking, and how the underutilization of Bilingual - Bicultural instruction in the classroom negatively affects the child's ability for academic success, as well as his ability to acquire a positive self-concept. The role of the teacher, and his function as a role model will be discussed also.

For the purpose of this presentation, Bilingual - Bicultural Education is defined theoretically as:

> Instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction...for any part or all of the school curriculum, and including study of the history and culture associated with the student's mother tongue. A complete program develops and maintains the children's self-esteem and a legitimate pride in both cultures.
> (Program under Bilingual Education Act, p.1)

The program content of a Bilingual - Bicultural classroom develops academic skills in the child's native language with the simultaneous introduction of English language skills. There occurs the inclusion of cultural heritage and the child's familiar experiences which will make the educational content of the school program relevant to himself and his world.

In a preschool, picture-oriented story books for visual

stimulation, provide the basis for much of the curriculum, many of which impart value judgements about particular cultures. Therefore, it follows that the first school experience will be influential in a child's awareness of cultural values. As stated by Suarez:

> Though much has been said about the "Dick and Jane" readers and the inability of the Chicano child to relate to such characters, the basic readers remain essentially unchanged. At best, Dick and Jane are shaded to appear brown, retaining their Anglo features;...Dick and the Anglo family continue to be presented as the ideal. (Suarez, Curriculum Conference, 1973)

The preschool classroom relies heavily on visual and auditory materials; thus primary influences will be the songs, pictures, displays and films in the classroom, field trips, music and games, which in a Bilingual - Bicultural setting, will be reflective of the Mexican American culture. (Mexican American Education Study, 1974). The preschool, therefore, should provide for language stimulation as well as the development of the child's social skills and self image.

Funding for Bilingual - Bicultural Education programs occurs at the primary and secondary grade levels, and the minimal recognition is given to the need for dual-language teaching in preschools.

This may be supported by a January 1976 survey conducted in Tucson, Arizona (Levy). The purpose of the survey was to ascertain how many preschools offered Bilingual - Bicultural programming. A total of eighty-seven schools surveyed showed 63 per cent

which had no provision for Bilingual programming; 17 per cent employed Aides (or Co-teachers) as a linguistic liaison; while only .08 per cent of the schools implemented Bilingual teaching instruction. Of the schools surveyed, 13.8 per cent noted no enrollment of Mexican American preschool age children.

A follow up study (Levy) was conducted in January, 1978 which showed an increase of 3.4 to 5.7 per cent usage of Bilingual instruction. However, shcools often defined Bilingual - Bicultural teaching methods differently in their use of dual-language instruction. Conclusively, it may be surmized, there is gross underutilization of Bilingual education in preschool settings. Furthermore, it may be speculated that due to this underutilization there appears to be a deficit in the building of a positive self-concept for the preschool child, since the barriers of communication often delay the understanding of concepts, and therefore the learning of social skills.

The Mexican American child who is non-English speaking falls victim to an educational system which insists on monolingualism and monoculturalism in its applied teaching methods. (Urquides, p.6). For these children, their first years of life have been predominanted by Spanish, and it is that language which has shaped the child's personality and social world. Therefore, it is these variables which must be considered in making the classroom an environment which will be conducive to the academic as well as emotional needs of all children. Parental involvement plays a key role in the curriculum development of a Bilingual -

Bicultural setting. (Kjolseth, 1972). Family participation will benefit, not only program planning, but also is an emotional liaison in helping the child adapt to the school environment.

According to what kind of home environment a child comes from, a child may already be oriented to success or failure in school. (Shaw and McCuen, 1960). Each child has a predisposed idea about his self-worth and level of competency. Purkey states that, "the early years of life are most critical in forming the child's opinion of himself." It would follow, therefore, that a child's self-concept, or, what he believes he is, will affect his academic and emotional levels of achievement.

Purkey refers to a child's self-image as an "invisible price tag, which a child carries with him eternally." These invisible tags may read, "fine value, or excellent buy."(p. 37). However, for children whose roots began in environments of emotional deprivation, the tags may say, "soiled, marked down, close-out, half-price, unworthy, unloved, or unwanted." (Purkey, p.37). Children acquire these labels by those people in the child's life who he sees as significant. Where the environment is void of respect and warmth, the child's perception of self-worth is undermined.

There is agreement among a number of researchers that students who achieve below their level of competence, suffer significant losses in self-esteem. (Goldberg, 1960; Carlton and Moore, 1966; Gibby and Gibby, 1967). For that reason, a child's

first school experience should be one which will foster respect for the language, culture, and the child as an individual.

As alluded to earlier, the acquisition of a positive self-concept is a powerful factor in the learning process (Purkey, 1970). All too often, schools become pyramids of failure due to demands put upon the child by his teacher for rapid environmental and linguistic adaption. A teacher may select his/her method for assisting the child in this adaption process via a pluralistic model of instruction or in contrast, choose a model which focuses upon assimilating the child into the Anglo culture. The former promotes ethnic language maintenance and the addition of language skills without destruction of the home language while the latter:

> ...emphasizes the superiority or inferiority of different varieties of language and culture and encourages restricted use to correct forms of school-approved varieties in all domains of usage. (Kjolseth, p.15).

My contention is that only in a pluralistic classroom can there be true Bilingual - Bicultural instruction, as defined in this paper. A teacher's attitudes will affect his relationship with each student. As stated by Purkey, "The teacher's beliefs about himself and his students are crucial factors in determining his effectiveness in the classroom." (Purkey, p.45).

It would follow then, that in a school setting of integrated ethnicity, it is important that the instructor have a precise and intimate sense of the values and norms within the given community. Specifically, those in relation to the family and their impact

upon the educational process and as well as a knowledge of the contrasting values of the non-ethnic culture.

In presenting contrasting values based on a traditional perception of Mexican culture, there are various levels of acculturation, and for that reason some of the values might not be applicable. It is important to note that in attempting to make the comparisons, some generalizations of each culture are made. Burruel and Chavez (1975) developed a model with contrasting values characteristic of the Mexican and American worlds:

Mexican World	American World
Cooperation	Competition
Politeness, courtesy	Frankness
Respect for authority	Defensiveness of it
Authority of father and obligation of mother	Shared authority between parents
Children as subordinate family members	Children taught to be independent
Close family ties and persistence of extended family	Independence of the conjugal unit

Therefore, if a teacher is not familiar with and sensitive to these variables, inner-conflict could distract and/or delay the child's learning process.

The area of progress measurement may further exemplify the importance and impact of attitudes fostered by an instructor, which he brings to the classroom. The DIAL (Developmental Indicator for the Assessment of Learning) test is administered in preschool settings, both in Spanish and English. It is a tool used to measure abilities in the areas of fine and gross motor skills, verbal communication, as well as the ability to conceptualize situations using specific visual cues.

As stated by Padilla and Garza, "No test of intelligence can be divorced from the cultural frame in which the examinee is expected to perform." (p.53). Therefore, it may be concluded that an examiner who is not sensitive to cultural differences will negatively bias the testing results. If the test is not effectively administered in the student's preferred language, he will score considerably below his actual ability (Padilla and Garza, 1975).

A teacher holds the power to adapt teaching methods such that an environment which will foster a positive self-concept may prevail. He/she may initially make use of positive or negative comments regarding the child's performance. (Purkey, 1970). Also in maintaining attention of both ethnic groups in a Bilingual - Bicultural setting, the instructor may ask the children to assist him by listening for language which sounds new to them. Finally, asking the children to assist in acting out portions of a story, or choosing children with the shortest attention span to turn the pages of the book, will enhance the cohesion and affectiveness of dual-language instruction. This method will aid the child who may foster a negative self-concept and assist the child in his acquisition of a healthy self-concept on which the Head Start curriculum was developed. (Crovetto, Fisher, Boureaux, 1967).

Thus, in establishing programs to meet the needs of Mexican American preschool children who are non-English speaking, special attention must be paid to the implementation of Bilingual - Bicultural programming. It may be ascertained that the sudden

immersion of a young child into an environment which lacks warmth, familial atmosphere and a system of language with which a child can communicate his needs may result in the created barrier of culture-shock; the affect of which may last a lifetime.

The subject of Bilingual - Bicultural education has raged in an eternal contest for validation. The indications are that the reinforcement of a common means of communciation will increase a child's feeling of self-confidence, security, and self-worth. Further, based on Kjolséth's definition of a diglassic (1972) classroom setting, children are able to function without the stress of exclusion, as there is continual promotion of both Spanish and English. Often, a preschool is the child's first experience away from home, thus promotion of the preferred language will increase a child's emotional development and assist him in acquiring feelings of self worth.

The conclusions seem unavoidable. The preschool teacher and his/her attitudes will play a major role in the child's acquisition of a positive self-concept as opposed to one which will inhibit social and intellectual development. Implementing Bilingual - Bicultural Education in preschools for any part, or all of the school curriculum with mutual inclusion of the history and culture associated with both ethnic groups will be a primary catalyst in a child's development of self-esteem and cultural pride. (Bilingual Education Act, 1971). There will be the promotion of a truly Bilingual - Bicultural setting only when both Mexican American and non-ethnic children are able to acquire learning skills equally, and without feelings of exclusion due

to language differences.

Perhaps the final verdict of education will be that increased utilization of Bilingual and Bicultural instruction in preschools, may be a key point in alleviating stress on children who enter elementary school without having had an opportunity to learn in an environment of learning via both the Spanish and English languages. The way in which language is taught, and by what model or method can deeply affect preschool children as well as those students at primary and secondary levels of education.

A Mexican American preschool child brings with him a rich and unique culture. He seeks answers and knowledge which will enable him to cope with and operate within an already established educational system. It is these children who are standing on the shoulders of giants--educators who have the knowledge and skill to promote Bilingualism as a talent. For educators hoping to reach the children of "la raza" there is need for intense committment and devotion to assist children in their quest to become useful and self-sufficient adults.

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